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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 001345

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/16/14

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [MOPS](#) [AM](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: Armenian-Azeri border clash

Ref: State 130470

Classified by Ambassador John Ordway. Reasons: 1.5 (B, D).

1. (C) Following receipt of reftel, DAO assistant spoke with the CHOD, Gen-Lt. Haratunyan, and Ambassador spoke to Ambassador Kasprzyk and Acting Foreign Minister Shugarian. The CHOD claimed that the Azeri side had initiated the outbreak of hostile action a week ago, and then on the night of June 14/15 began shelling an Armenian village. The Armenian side "shot back." At 02:00 Ambassador Kasprzyk called the CHOD while monitoring on the Azeri side. The CHOD said he had told Kasprzyk that if the Azeris continued the shelling, Armenia would take the hill that apparently was the original Azeri position before they moved forward a week ago. Haratunyan said that the Armenian MOD had been unable to establish any contact with the Azeri side, and was using Ambassador Kasprzyk to pass messages to Baku. He did not provide any timeline (or deadline) for the threatened Armenian forward movement.

2. (C) Ambassador spoke to Kasprzyk by phone shortly after he had completed his June 14/15 monitoring mission. Kasprzyk, en route to Tbilisi, said that it had not been quiet the previous night. The monitoring that had just been completed had established that one Armenian officer had been killed, while on the Azeri side a woman and a child had been injured. In addition, livestock on the Azeri side had been killed. Kasprzyk said that he could not determine which side had started the firing the night before. He theorized that the Armenians had subjected the Azeri village of Mazamly to a barrage as a means of psychological pressure, and that the casualties were the result of rounds that had actually landed in the village. The attack clearly had frightened and enraged the villagers. 8-10 of them came to the monitoring site (2 km from the village). Aggravated by "untactful" remarks by the Azeri military escorts, the villagers were extraordinarily hostile. The Azeri military decided to leave the scene before the villagers engaged in violent action against them.

3. (C) The Armenian side requested, through the field monitors, a face-to-face meeting with the Azeri local commander. The Azeris refused, and requested a discussion with the Armenian local commander via the OSCE radio connection. The Armenian side refused. The Azeri side then indicated that they would be willing to have a face-to-face meeting. This, however, requires the approval of the Minister of Defense. Although Kasprzyk told the Ambassador he was very doubtful the Minister would agree, he planned to pursue this option with the Minister on June 16. (The Minister is out of the country, and is returning the morning of June 16.)

4. (C) Kasprzyk said that the situation was tense and very dangerous. There is considerable and constant military movement, and both sides appear to be reinforcing their positions -- which are very close to each other. Each side, he believes, feels it is in a corner and neither side wants to retreat.

5. (C) The Armenians recently realigned the main road between Noyembrian and Idjevan. The new route takes inter-city traffic out of range of Azeri positions. (The road had come under Azeri fire periodically over the past year.) Kasprzyk theorized that the Azeri side believed its leverage had been reduced by the road realignment, and decided to regain its leverage by moving closer to the Armenian pumping station. (Note: Kasprzyk did not know whether the station was in Armenia or Azerbaijan, but said that it is located between the lines that had been maintained by the two armies.) The workers manning the pumping station had fled when the Azeris moved closer, and the Armenians were unwilling to lose the water supply for five villages.

6. (C) Ambassador spoke to Deputy Foreign Minister Shugarian, and passed on the points provided reftel. He emphasized that the situation was tense and fraught with danger of escalation. The U.S. expected that both sides would refrain from taking any actions that would exacerbate the situation, and especially refrain from any further firing. Shugarian said he would get in touch with the MOD and President's Office to pass on the message.

17. (C) French Ambassador Cuny telephoned the Ambassador to say that Paris was also very worried about the situation, and offered to join in a co-chairs demarche to the Armenian side.

ORDWAY